



Republican Policy Committee

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May 24, 1995

Clinton Asserts Relevancy by Holding Disaster Aid, Anti-terrorism Funding Hostage

Yes it's true, President Clinton — the same man who in 1993 declared that \$16 billion in new deficit spending, largely, pork and political payoffs, was really "emergency assistance" and "priority investment"; and, who on February 6, 1995 sent Congress a budget that made annual \$200-and-\$300 billion deficits official government policy; and, who for a solid month sat silent in the White House while Democrats in the Senate killed the balanced budget constitutional amendment — plans to unsheathe his mighty veto pen for the first time to use on a \$9 billion net deficit reduction bill. This bill, H.R. 1158, which actually saves taxpayers money by taking back \$16 billion in previously awarded funds, at the same time provides \$7 billion in funding the President requested for disaster relief for 40 states, and for funding counterterrorism activities in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing.

Why is the President tossing out the veto threat on this, of all bills? The answer, if you believe the letters from his OMB director and chief of staff, is because he has identified what he claims is "literally billions" of dollars' worth of pork that Congress failed to rescind. And to help out, he has courageously made four very vague proposals to get rid of it! However, he has no intention of applying the savings to deficit reduction, but instead offers six areas of spending that he wants to increase. How convenient that the so-called "pork" he has identified (his OMB director cites \$1.5 billion) just about equals the cost of the spending increases he wants (\$1.4 billion).

On May 22, OMB Director Alice Rivlin wrote Senate Appropriations Chairman Hatfield to inform him of President Clinton's intention to veto H.R. 1158, listing the additional cuts and spending increases the Administration is insisting on before the President could consider signing it. As usual, the spending increases the President wants are the more specific proposals, while the spending cuts are characteristically less specific.

Hypocrisy and Disaster Assistance

"We are Americans when these things [i.e., disasters] happen. We help each other. Let us not put something in the Constitution that ties our hands, whether Republicans or Democrats, that ties our hands and says you cannot act in a disaster except if you have a supermajority."

[Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), floor statement in support of the Boxer amendment to the balanced budget amendment, February 14, 1995, S-2600.]

"Oftentimes we in the Senate do not move quickly to pass bills. Thankfully, we have moved quickly to pass bills to help restore the lives of disaster victims. In such cases of catastrophic disasters, when local officials cannot meet the needs of the victims, we must not let budget debates and haggling over how to achieve 60 votes slow our effort to meet our commitment."

[Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), floor statement in support of the Boxer amendment to the balanced budget amendment, February 14, 1995, S-2616.]

On February 14 of this year, 28 Democrats voted in favor of the Boxer amendment requiring only a majority vote in each House to appropriate disaster and emergency relief funds. Those are 28 votes that the residents of Oklahoma City and Los Angeles (the bulk of the disaster funds go for relief for the Northridge earthquake) will be counting on if President Clinton vetoes H.R. 1158.

The arithmetic is simple: if you add the 28 Senate Democrats, who on principle oppose super-majority votes for disaster aid, with the 54 Senate Republicans who support passage of H.R. 1158, you arrive at the solid, veto-proof total of 82 votes for adoption of the conference report — that's good news for Americans living in the 40 states scheduled to receive disaster relief, and for those concerned about terrorism.

The bad news is that, despite Senate passage of the Supplemental and Rescissions bill by a 99-0 vote (Roll Call Vote No. 132, April 7, 1995), a number of Democrats in the Senate may abandon their own principles with respect to disaster relief and assist President Clinton in his efforts to kill the bill.

The Courage to Cut? — Not Quite!

President Clinton proposes to cut (or further rescind):

- 1) \$438 million from unspecified courthouses and "other federal office buildings."

Relevant Facts/Unanswered Questions: First, if President Clinton honestly feels that spending for courthouse construction is "pork" at its worst, he should have included this urgent \$438 million rescission in his FY95 budget. But courthouses were not included among the paltry \$1.5 billion worth of rescissions requested in the Clinton FY96 budget. Second, if there still is "pork" lurking in these federal building projects (H.R. 1158

already cuts \$580 million from these projects), why can't the President identify it? Why, after repeated requests, have House and Senate leadership been denied a specific list of cuts that add up to the President's magic number of \$438 million?

2) \$450 million from, you guessed it, "unspecified" highway demonstration funds.

Relevant Facts/Unanswered Questions: First, has it occurred to the President that this so called "pork" is for transportation projects that were authorized by a Democrat-controlled Congress and that the President himself signed into law? In 1993, long before being "relevant" was an issue, President Clinton didn't see any pork anywhere in the transportation budget: "To regain our economic edge, we must invest more. We will upgrade our nation's roads, bridges, mass transit, and airports; support high-speed rail links between major cities; and create 'information highways' that link homes, businesses, schools and libraries to databases and records" (*Putting People First*, p. 41, February 17, 1993). Second, exactly where is this \$450 million worth of transportation pork? Unlike the House and Senate conferees, the President refuses to identify the projects he has in mind for rescission. Further, the conference report cuts a total of \$2.6 billion in the transportation budget despite the President's original proposal to cut just \$420 million.

3) \$474 million from government travel and overhead.

Relevant Facts/Unanswered Questions: The President's original request contained no proposed rescission for travel and administrative expenses. Despite the Administration's explicit indifference toward cutting government overhead, the conferees agreed to rescind \$342 million in travel and administrative expenses.

4) \$102 million from the Food for Peace program (PL 480).

Relevant Facts/Unanswered Questions: President Clinton requested \$160 million in FY95 for PL 480 Title III and Congress provided almost full funding for the request by approving \$157.4 million. Now the President insists that \$102 million should be rescinded from the funds he said were so desperately needed last year (his original supplemental request was for a rescission of \$142.5 million). Once again, last year's "priority investment" has become this year's pork spending, according to the President.

Now That We've Cut It — Let's Spend It!

The Clinton Administration has found it considerably easier to identify the specific programs for which it intends to increase spending. However, outside of scoring political points among certain liberal special interest groups, there is little justification for adding back \$1.4 billion proposed for rescission. According to OMB Director, Alice Rivlin, "the conferees cut deeply into important investments — notably, for education, national service, and the

environment — while ignoring literally billions of dollars in highway demonstration projects and federal courthouses that they could have cut." As noted above, the President has refused to identify a single courthouse or highway project to cut among the "literally billions of dollars" in pork that is compelling him to brandish his veto pen. But when it comes to spending, the President has no shortage of earmarks.

President Clinton proposes to restore the following amounts to the conferees' proposed rescissions:

5) \$619 million, as follows: \$84 million for GOALS 2000; \$210 million for National Service; \$236 million for Safe and Drug Free Schools; \$20 million for School-to-Work; \$4 million for One-Stop Career Shopping; and \$65 million for the JTPA Adult Job Training.

Relevant Facts/Unanswered Questions: The conferees agreed on cuts from GOALS 2000 totalling \$91 million, but this still leaves the program with three times more money than it received last year. It is difficult to imagine how the Administration can accuse Congress of "deeply" cutting a program whose funding actually triples in just one year. With respect to the Safe and Drug Free Schools program, \$245 million is still provided for the program, while HHS is expected to spend an additional \$2.9 billion on substance abuse activities this year.

6) \$500 million for EPA's Water Infrastructure/State Revolving Fund.

Relevant Facts/Unanswered Questions: The conferees decided to rescind \$1.3 billion for water treatment grant funds that last year's Democrat-controlled Congress decided not to authorize: \$600 million was appropriated in FY94, and \$700 million in FY95 for water treatment grants, but the money could never be spent. In short, President Clinton wants to add back \$500 million for grants that cannot be awarded because no authorization for the program exists.

7) \$230 million, as follows: \$150 million for Assisted Housing; \$30 million for Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS; and \$50 million for Veterans Medical Care.

Relevant Facts/Unanswered Questions: The conferees rescinded over \$5 billion for Assisted Housing; what the President hopes to accomplish by restoring \$150 million remains a mystery. Further, the conferees' \$30 million rescission for Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS is identical to the funding level contained in the President's original budget request. Contrary to the President's remarks, the rescission for veterans' medical care will not impact medical staffing levels and equipment. The conference report rescission removes money that cannot be spent due to personnel restrictions imposed by the President.

8) \$20 million for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Relevant Facts/Unanswered Questions: The conferees rescinded only \$20 million of \$150 million in surplus funds for WIC. Not one woman, child, or infant would be denied assistance under the WIC program as a result of this modest rescission — and the President is flat wrong when he suggests otherwise.

9) \$31 million, as follows: \$25.9 million for the Family and Community Endeavor Schools program; and \$5 million for the Office of Justice Drug Courts.

Relevant Facts/Unanswered Questions: The Family and Community Endeavor Schools program was a Republican initiative led by Senators Domenici and Danforth. No funds have yet been spent on the program despite a \$37 million authorization for FY95 and \$104 million for FY96. The conferees decided to adopt the House's proposed rescission of \$36 million, not out of opposition to the concept of community-based youth development, but in anticipation of House/Senate legislation establishing a unified block grant approach for youth development activities.

10) \$14 million for Community Development Banks.

Relevant Facts/Unanswered Questions: The conferees agreed to the Dole-Daschle level. The President's add-back would be used to establish a new bureaucracy in D.C. to promote Community Development Banks instead of going directly to disadvantaged communities where the money is needed.

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